

Birstall Acorns Under 5's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	226252
Inspection date	16 November 2007
Inspector	Patricia Bowler
Setting Address	C/o Highcliffe Community Centre, Greengate Lane, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 3DL
Telephone number	0116 2672795
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Registered person	Acorn Under Five's (Birstall)
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Birstall Acorns Under 5's Pre school Playgroup opened in 1983. It operates from a self-contained room in the community wing which is part of Highcliffe County Primary School in Birstall, Leicestershire. A maximum of 25 children may attend the setting at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and Monday and Thursday from 12.30 to 15.10 and Tuesday and Wednesday from 12.40 to 15.10 during school term time. All children share access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 43 children from three to under five years on roll. All of the children receive funding for early education. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The Pre school Playgroup employs five members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Exemplary policies and procedures ensure children's health is given high consideration. Children receive excellent levels of care through diligent daily routines effectively maintained by the staff. Anti-bacterial solutions are used on all surfaces to prevent the spread of infection and meticulous cleaning routines between sessions ensures all children benefit from a hygienic environment. Children develop an acute understanding of meticulous hygiene practice as they independently address their personal needs. They use liquid soap and low-level hand dryers as they wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. Picture prompts act as discussion points to gain awareness of germ control as they successfully develop consistent daily routines. Children benefit from sensitive attitudes to privacy and hygiene is maintained with single use aprons and gloves for changing routines.

Comprehensive documentation is completed with parents to accurately record children's individual health and dietary requirements. Clear procedures ensure the exclusion of sick children and contact details in case they become ill at the playgroup. Any accidents children have are managed appropriately as staff have sound knowledge of first aid, available first aid equipment and clear recording systems.

Children benefit from regular opportunities for physical activities and are skilled at using a range of indoor and outdoor equipment. Access to the multi framed adventure playground, within the school perimeter promotes age-appropriate challenge and confidence as they climb and balance gaining coordination and control of their bodies. Free flow play operates so children choose between indoor and outdoor activities throughout the session. They change from indoor shoes to a range of varying sized Wellington Boots, purchased by the setting to ensure their feet remain dry and 'we don't bring germs in from outside'. Children show high levels of independence as they seek the correct size clearly identified on the boots to facilitate this. Extremely well-organised activities are available but children steer their own play to extend and develop these. Themed boxes of resources are available on the enclosed veranda and children access umbrellas as an adult tilts the awning above the veranda to release the rain water gathered there. They delight as the rain water splashes to the ground and giggle as this goes the opposite way making them jump as it splashes behind them. Children run, jump and skip as they use a range of resources including balls, beanbags, hoops and skipping ropes. Hand eye coordination skills are enhanced as they aim balls through a low-level basket ball net celebrating gleefully as they score a basket.

Excellent arrangements ensure children can rest and relax on soft furnishings. Low- level sofas and floor cushions are available in the quiet area where they access a wide range of books for their own and shared reading opportunities.

Food is hygienically prepared as staff have attended food hygiene training. A milk bar system operates throughout the session so children can address their needs as they choose. A variety of foods are provided including fresh fruit which is available through the fresh fruit campaign enabling children to enjoy whole pieces of fruit. This is supplemented as children experience a range of exotic fruits provided by staff. Great interest was shown as a 'Dragon fruit' was provided. Children discuss it's 'scaley' skin and 'squelchy' texture and crowd eagerly around the staff member as it is cut in half to reveal the fruit uttering comments such as 'yuk' and 'eeee' as the fruit is revealed. A pot of spoons is provided for children to taste and they follow

staff example to do so. They talk enthusiastically about the taste in comparison to 'melon and lemon but with crunchy bits'. A range of additional snacks are provided and children use knives skilfully to spread their own crackers. They choose between water, which they pour from a covered jug, and individual milk bottles where they use drinking straws. Drinks are also readily accessible in addition to the milk bar for children to have when they require from a ready prepared jug of water.

Children learn about the environment as they place plastic bottles in the recycling bin. Fruit cores are placed in a separate bin which they help to take to the compost bin in the garden. Children speak knowledgeably about the 'rotting process' and the use of the compost to feed the plants in the garden.

Children talk about produce which they have planted, cared for and harvested. A garden patch is designated within the outside play area which children take responsibility for. Age-appropriate gardening tools enable them to work successfully alongside adults. They speak enthusiastically about the growing process, changes they have noted and satisfaction as they enjoyed eating the produce. Tomatoes, cabbages, beans and herbs have been grown and they have helped with hanging baskets and planters with winter flowers on the veranda.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit from vigilant procedures including a systematic risk assessment, health and safety policy to provide a safe secure environment. A coded lock on the entrance door ensures only known adults enter as parents and visitors are admitted by staff. Effective arrangements ensure the outside play area is safe and meticulous security ensures children are not able to leave the premises unsupervised. Effective organisation of equipment and resources allow the children to access these freely and safely to promote independence and choice.

Diligent methods ensure that toys and resources are well maintained and suitable for the age of the children present. A photographic inventory is maintained, also accessible to children to look at and make requests to extend their play. Picture prompts are used by children as they remind each other to look, listen and share as they play and they take an active part in tidying away. They learn about keeping themselves safe as they sweep up split sand and use the mop during water play 'so we don't slip'. Four different coloured dustpans and brushes are stored at children's level to encourage their independence as they take responsibility to keep the environment safe.

Appropriate fire safety equipment is available and vigilant arrangements for emergency evacuation, including regular fire drills equip children with the knowledge of what to do if the need arises. Excellent arrangements are established for outings including procedures to maintain high adult to child ratios by inviting parents to accompany their children. Children learn to keep themselves safe on outings and have very good awareness of road safety. The lollipop lady outside the school has visited the setting and children know her name, her role in helping them to cross safely and why they access the setting with her help. They speak earnestly about using pedestrian crossings and excellent resources, including a zebra crossing, road signs and a lollipop sign enable them to practise as they play.

Children are protected from harm because the staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice if necessary. Staff have attended

various training events and have established a clear written policy to ensure parents are fully informed of their responsibility to protect children from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Dedicated staff use considerable knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum to skilfully utilise children's free play to promote the individual progress of each child. Excellent planning ensures all areas are successfully covered and re-visited to secure and consolidate children's learning. Assessments and observations are meticulously recorded to identify the next steps in learning and very detailed reports provide parents with clear information about children's developmental levels. Sensitive interaction from staff promotes their care and learning as children develop high levels of confidence and self-esteem. Children are eager to attend the setting. They enjoy their time in the vibrant environment where they make active choices about their play to enhance their own progress and personal development. They are highly motivated and show considerable levels of interest as staff work diligently to ensure children reach their full potential in learning. Personal, social and emotional development is a significant strength within the setting as staff create innovative opportunities to promote children's confidence and self-esteem. They are greeted warmly as they arrive and separate very well from parents as they settle and engage in the wide variety of exciting activities available. They are highly motivated to learn and show impeccable manners saying 'excuse me' if they need to interrupt during adult conversations. Every opportunity is given to encourage children's confidence and independence. They decide when to have their morning or afternoon snack as this is available throughout the session. They select and pour their own drinks, use knives skilfully to spread their own crackers and develop care for the environment as they recycle plastic bottles and food wastes.

The accommodation and resources are used exceptionally well and time is used imaginatively and creatively to extend children's learning through play. Core activities such as sand, water, free expression painting and mark-making are available at all times in both indoor and outdoor play. Children relish their time in the outside play area where they confidently ride wheeled toys, climb and develop balancing skills on a range of challenging and stimulating equipment to promote their physical development. A garden plot is cultivated to successfully grow vegetables, herbs and tomatoes. They talk knowledgeably about the growing process and how they water and harvest the produce including the use of 'home made' compost.

Children enjoy playing in a construction building site effectively cordoned with safety webbing, warning strips and danger notices. They wear safety jackets and helmets as they build with sponge house bricks using sand and water to mix and apply 'cement'. They use excellent thought processes, skilfully initiated by adults when the tower of bricks continually falls. They look at the construction lines of bricks to the premises and copy these to build stable walls. Children use spirit levels, checking 'the bubble should be in the middle if it's level', trowels, hammers and safety nails as they utilise strips of wood into their constructions. They work well with peers as they discuss where the bricks are placed and take turns to fetch water from inside in small buckets.

Children steer their own play from the accessible resource boxes in the outside area. One child decides to fill a spray bottle with water which then entices others to follow evolving in a spontaneous activity to wash the setting windows. Children independently refill empty bottles and access wiper blades and sponges to skilfully clean the windows.

Excellent play opportunities are utilised by staff to provoke children's thoughts as they steer their own play. The role play area is changed regularly to reflect different scenarios and children enjoy the Green Grocer's shop where they buy and sell a range of fruits and vegetables. Shopping baskets and trolley's are used for produce purchased and children use purses, cash registers, money and credit cards as they pay for these. They gain awareness of mathematical terms and theories as they calculate more and less and use weighing scales with weights. Posters, number charts and mark making materials are used by children as they make reference to different fruits and vegetables, create shopping lists and associate quantity to numbers.

An extensive range of writing and drawing materials entice children to express their mark making skills. Children skilfully use tools such as scissors, sticky tape, glue sticks, shape punchers and paper presses to extend creative activities. They use halved vegetables and fruit which they paint carefully before printing onto paper engaging in discussions about those used. They discuss their favourites and dislikes evoking comments such as 'I don't like Brussel sprouts to eat but they make wicked prints'. They express pleasure and pride in their creations which are attractively displayed within the setting. Children have their own low-level display board where they mount their own pictures.

Children gainfully learn about the wider world through innovative activities and equipment to support their imagination and curiosity. They hunt for metal in a tray of leaves using magnets and a small metal detector. They use these on different surfaces to 'check for magnetic fields' discarding wood, glass and the veranda floor. They develop excellent understanding of information and technology as they regularly and independently access the computer. Written text and visual aids inform the children of the operational instructions and they interpret these effectively to instigate and manage their own play.

Children enjoy the extensive range of books, including hand made, early reference and photograph albums in the quiet area. They are enthralled as they listen intently to very well narrated stories and join in familiar phrases. They gain appreciation for a range of music from classical to familiar rhymes and songs and join in enthusiastically in action songs. Musical instruments are enjoyed outside where children march as a band and have their photograph taken as a group orchestra.

The range of activities and play opportunities enable children to make excellent progress towards the early learning goals and acquire significant levels of confidence and self-esteem to contribute to their overall development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

A clear and concise written policy works effectively in practice to promote equal opportunities and anti bias practice where the aim is 'for children to flourish in an environment where their contribution is recognised and valued'. Children receive warm cuddles and affection as they build trusting relationships with the staff to contribute to their sense of belonging. A recently introduced children's questionnaire enables them to identify staff members, other children and things they like best about their playgroup. Children make active decisions about their play, making choices to develop their confidence and self-esteem. They learn about the community in which they live as they engage in local walks and various outdoor activities. An excellent range of appropriate play resources provide opportunities for them to develop an awareness of other cultures, disability and the wider world in which they live. For example, dressing up clothes reflect different cultures and a superb range of books enable children to extend their

knowledge and understanding as they freely access these in the book area. Members of the community are invited into the group and children have enjoyed a visit from a local hairdresser, linked to their role play area, watching as he cut and styled an adults hair. Parents have contributed by helping with gardening, a mother bringing and bathing a new born baby and a nurse bringing in medical equipment and talking about issues such as injections to inform and allay children's anxieties. Children celebrate a range of cultural festivals and talk about Rangoli patterns on their hands and Diya lights for Diwali. Written text around the setting is displayed in additional languages to English. Children recognise this, relating it to different cultures as they engage in interesting conversations about Diwali.

Children with additional needs are cared for extremely well. Sensitive arrangements ensure they are fully included in all aspects within the playgroup. Staff are fully aware of current legislation including information relating to the Disability Discrimination Act and a detailed written policy reflects a strong commitment to ensure the provision of quality care for all children. Strong links are established with the local authority special educational needs coordinator and staff work diligently with other professionals involved.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting positive behaviour and successful methods are adapted effectively to meet the ages and developmental stages of all children. Picture prompts remind them as they develop an acute awareness of the needs of others as they help each other and learn to share and take turns. They play confidently alone and socially and ask for appropriate help if required. Children respond positively as they take responsibility within the group. Two children, each session, are identified as 'helpers'. They sound chime bars to denote tidying away time as children play an active role in this task. Helpers receive a sticker, a self-selected number of claps and a verbal 'thank you' from staff and children. Clear rota systems ensure all children take on the helper role to increase their sense of importance as an individual within the group. Children listen intently to any staff intervention and respond positively to a consistent use of praise and encouragement.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Effective relationships ensure the staff know the children very well and they receive excellent care appropriate to their needs because meticulous arrangements ensure their individual needs are discussed and recorded. Parents are actively included in initiating clear starting points to plan for their child's play and development. They complete comprehensive registration documents to identify children's levels in play, communication, self-help, physical skills, behaviour and experience out and about in the community. This provides staff with valuable information about children's experiences at home and contributes to individual learning plans for each child. Information is regularly shared through a variety of methods including, an information board and file in the entrance area, regular newsletters and planned meetings with children's key workers, where progress is discussed and joint decisions taken for the next steps in learning. Systematic methods including a comprehensive parents welcome pack and a parent helper handbook ensures they know about the playgroup's commitment to providing excellent quality of care for children and how they can contribute to this. Children enjoy special events such as sports day where parent races are included and various celebrations and outings where parents take an active role. Most parents attend the playgroup on a voluntary rota to gain an insight into their child's time at the group. Parents express high regard for the provision and the care their children receive. Their views are collated on a starter, leaver and intermittent questionnaire during the time their child attends and form a vital part of ongoing monitoring and improvement plans to enhance the care children receive. Information about the complaints policy is available to parents in the welcome pack and robust procedures ensure that any concerns are acknowledged and managed

to reach satisfactory outcomes for parents. Positive links between home and playgroup are fostered with a loan system where story sacks and toys can be taken home.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

overall the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides. Children are cared for by suitable, qualified and experienced staff, employed through robust recruitment and employment procedures. Arrangements ensure staff are effectively deployed to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution within the group.

Space and resources are organised successfully and spontaneous and inspired activities provide children with interesting and exciting experiences to broaden their overall development. Children are highly motivated and play effectively independently and with others. They benefit from the unquestionable commitment of dedicated and skilful staff. The professionalism of the staff and exemplary documentation describes the service provided and is completed to ensure children's individual needs are recognised and successfully met. A high level of confidentiality is maintained as parents receive pertinent information relating to their child.

Leadership and management is outstanding. Staff work extremely well as a team under the highly professional guidance of the manager and have a clear vision for early years education. A strong emphasis on children's personal development and achievement enables them to develop considerable levels of independence and self-esteem. Staff skilfully provide activities and experiences to encourage children to be self-motivated and active members of the setting. Meticulous monitoring and evaluation procedures, and extremely competent staff work effectively to provide a rich, vibrant environment where children flourish as staff inspire them to reach their full potential in learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was required to ensure that effective procedures are in place for checking that staff are suitably qualified and experienced to work with children and have been vetted by the regulator.

Robust procedures are established for the recruitment and employment of staff. Present staffing levels include all members holding early years qualifications. Children are cared for by suitably qualified and experienced staff as thorough employment specifications ensure staff joining the team meet these requirements. Regular appraisals are effectively maintained to monitor staff working practice and identify and meet training needs to further enhance the care provided for children.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1st of April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk